

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5922

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PAIES

AMEMBASSY ROME

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 9875

E.O. 11652: GDS

TSGS: PINS PINT ET

SUBJ: DISTRUBANCES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

1. THIS MESSAGE SUMMARIZES THE UP-COUNTRY DISTURBANCES AND DISRUPTIONS IN ETHIOPIA KNOWN TO US AT THE PRESENT TIME. MOST OF THESE HAVE BEEN REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, BUT EMBASSY BELIEVES SUMMARY WILL PROVE USEFUL TO WASHINGTON RECIPIENTS. BY PROVINCES, BEGINNING IN THE NORTH, THEY ARE AS FOLLOWS:

A. ERITREA -- THE DIRG'S MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM, THE ERITREAN SECESSIONIST MOVEMENT HAS BEEN DESCRIBED IN SOME DETAIL IN NUMEROUS MESSAGES, BOTH FROM ADDIS AND ASMARA.

B. TIGRE -- IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT IN RESPONSE TO A GROWING SEPARATIST SENTIMENT AT LEAST ONE AND POSSIBLY TWO SO-CALLED TIGRE LIBERATION FRONTS ARE BEING ORGANIZED, ONE OF THEM IN THE NAME OF RAS MENGESHA. THE ERITREAN ISURGENTS HAVE ALSO

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CONDUCTED SOME FORAYS INTO TIGRE WHICH HAVE ELICITED ETHIOPIAN

REPRISALS AGAINST SOME TIGRE VILLAGES AS HAS HAPPENED IN ERITREA.

C. BEGEMDIR -- EMBASSY HAS UNCONFIRMED REPORTS OF A DISSIDENT GROUP LED BY A FORMER ARMY MAJOR OPERATING IN THE GONDAR AREA. THE WESTERN AREA OF BEGEMDIR, NEAR NETEMA, HAS BEEN THE SCENE OF WIDESPREAD BANDIT ACTIVITY. INCREASED LAWLESSNESS, SOME OF IT ZEMETCHA INSPIRED, HAS ALSO BEEN EVIDENT IN THE REST OF THE PROVINCE. THE EMBASSY IS IN POSSESSION OF AN EPMG DOCUMENT WHICH CONFIRMS THIS INCREASING LAWLESSNESS IN BEGEMDIR AND PARTS OF WOLLO AND GOJJAM. (NOTE: BEGEMDIR IS ALSO WHERE EXILED LEADER GENERAL NEGA TEGEGNE HAS HIS BASE OF SUPPORT.)

D. WOLLO -- DEJ. BERHANE-MESKAL DESTA, ACCORDING TO A RECENT ADDIS ZEMEN (AMHARIC LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER), IS STILL AT LARGE IN LASTA AWRAJA. EMBASSY ALSO HAS UNCONFIRMED REPORTS OF A DISSIDENT GROUP IN NORTHERN WOLLO NEAR THE TIGRE BORDER AND A THIRD GROUP OPERATING SOUTHEAST OF DESSIE. IN ADDITION, WOLLO PROVINCE IS HOME BASE FOR THE AFAR, WHICH, ALONG WITH THE ERITREAN SECESSIONIST MOVEMENT, PRESENTS THE MOST SERIOUS THREAT TO THE EPMG. THE AFARS ACTUALLY RESIDE IN PORTIONS OF FIVE ETHIOPIAN PROVINCES.

E. GOJJAM -- EMBASSY PRESUMES THAT SEMEGNEH DESTA CONTINUES TO OPERATE IN EASTERN GOJJAM. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE ONE UNCONFIRMED REPORT THAT SEMEGNEH WAS KILLED, WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE EPMG WOULD HAVE ANNOUNCED THIS INFORMATION WERE IT TRUE. THE SIZE OF SEMEGNEH'S FOLLOWING IS UNKNOWN BUT AT ONE TIME THE EPMG MOUNTED A SUBSTANTIAL EFFORT AGAINST HIM, INCLUDING USE OF SPOTTER PLANES, JET FIGHTERS AND HELICOPTERS. EMBASSY HAS SEVERAL UNCONFIRMED REPORTS OF TWO OTHER DISSIDENT GROUPS, ONE IN WESTERN AND ONE IN NORTHEASTERN GOJJAM. SHIFTA (OUTLAW) ACTIVITY IS ALSO ON THE INCREASE IN GOJJAM.

F. WOLLEGA -- ACCORDING TO TWO REPORTS BELIEVED RELIABLE, DEJ. DEREJE MAKONNEN IS LEADING A DISSIDENT GROUP NEAR FINCHA WHICH FORCED THE EVACUATION OF ZEMETCHA STUDENTS FROM THAT AREA. SEMETCHA STUDENTS HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN FORCED (FOR THE SECOND TIME) TO EVACUATE SHAMBU AWRAJA BECAUSE OF LOCAL RESISTANCE TO THEM. UNCONFIRMED REPORTS PLACE ANOTHER DISSIDENT GROUP IN GHIMBI AWRAJA OF WESTERN WOLLEGA.

G. SHOA -- THE BIRU BROTHERS CONTINUE TO OPERATE IN THE MANZ AREA OF NORTHERN SHOA. EPMG FORCES MAY HAVE SUFFERED AS MANY CONFIDENTIAL

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AS 100 CASUALTIES IN THEIR EFFORTS TO DISLODGE THE BIRUS AND HAVE APPARENTLY DECIDED TO IGNORE THEM FOR THE TIME BEING. THE DISSIDENT GROUP IN THE TEGULET-BULGA AREA OF EASTERN SHOA REPORTEDLY CONTINUES TO OPERATE IN SPITE OF THE CAPTURE AND EXECUTION OF SEVERAL OF ITS LEADERS. A RECENT ISSUE OF ADDIS ZEMEN INDICATED THAT ASRAT GETANEH, APPARENTLY THE LEADER OF THE GROUP, REMAINS AT LARGE. EMBASSY HAS REPORTS OF FIGHTING IN GURAGE COUNTRY NEAR BUTAJIRA,

SOUTHEASTERN SHOA. WHILE WE ARE UNAWARE OF THE NATURE OF THE FIGHTING, ETHIOPIAN MEDIA IN RECENT WEEKS CONTINUE TO REPORT THAT LARGE NUMBER OF INSURGENTS, NOW TOTALING OVER 1,000 HAVE RALLIED TO THE GOVERNMENT SIDE. GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED MEDIA HAVE ALSO INDICATED THAT THERE HAD BEEN FIGHTING IN THE WOLISSO (CHION) AREA OF WESTERN SHOA, TOW HOURS WEST OF ADDIS ABABA BY ROAD. (THIS IS A GALLA-INHABITED AREA WHERE GENERAL TADESSE BIRU OPERATED PRIOR TO HIS CAPTURE AND EXECUTION.)

H. HARARGHE -- EMBASSY HAS UNCONFIRMED REPORTS OF A SOMALI LIBERATION FRONT AND AN OGADEN LIBERATION FRONT OPERATING IN

HARARGHE, AND ONE REPORT OF A "GALLA ARMY" (SEE ADDIS 9732). HARARGHE IS ONE OF THE ONLY PROVINCES WHERE FOREIGNERS HAVE BEEN SPECIFICALLY TARGETTED BY OUTLAW/DISSIDENT GROUPS, INCLUDING A RECENT ATTACK ON THE US NAVY TEAM OPERATING THERE. A UNDP TEAM WHICH WAS CONFRONTED BY SOMALI NOMADS CARRYING ENFIELD RIFLES LENDS CREDENCE TO REPORTS WE HAVE BEEN HEARING FOR FIVE OR SIX MONTHS NOW THAT SOMALIA RECEIVED A LARGE SHIPMENT OF LEE ENFIELDS (FROM ITALY, THE STORY GOES) WHICH IT HAS BEEN DISTRIBUTING AMONG ETHNIC SOMALI NAMADS IN THE OGADEN ENCOURAGING THEM TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES THERE.

I. BALE -- A BALE LIVERATION FRONT HAS REPORTBEEN IN EXISTENCE FOR SOME TEN YEARS AND ALTHOUGH WE HAVE HEARD REPORTS OF SCATTERED LAWLESSNESS (INCLUDING THE KILLING O POLICE OFFICER IN NORTHERN BALE RECENTLY), WE ARE UNCERTAIN TO WHOM TO ATTRIBUTE THESE ACTS. THE ZEMETCHA STUDENTS HAVE BEEN VERY ACTIVE IN BALE, INCLUDING ORGAINIZING PEASANTS AGAINST THE DIRG.

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INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA
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AMEMBASSY PARIS
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 9875

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PINT ET
SUBJ: DISTURBANCES IN THE COUTRYSIDE

J. ARUSSI -- ZEMETCHA STUDENTS HAVE BEEN HYPER-ACTIVE IN PARTS OF ARUSSI, ESPECIALLY IN THE CAPITAL, ASSELA, WHERE THEYORGAINED THREE 150-MEMBER "RED GUARD" UNITS AND IN SOUTHERN ARUSSI NEAR KOFFELE. A STUDENT CAMPAIGNER FROM KOFFELE INDICATED THAT SOME 80 ZEMETCHA STUDENTS REMAIN IN JAIL IN KOFFELE FOR KILLING A SOLDIER. EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE WITNESSED ZEMETCHA-LED PEASANTS STOPPING TRAFFIC ALONG THE MAIN ROAD THERE.

K. SIDAMO -- AS GOVERNMENT FORCES BECOME MORE THINLY SPREAD OUT, MANY TRIBAL GROUPS, PARTICULARLY IN THE SOUTH, HAVE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF WEAKENED GOVERNMENT FORCES BECOME MORE THINLY SPREAD OUT, MANY TRIBAL GROUPS, PARTICULARLY IN THE SOUTH, CONFIDENTIAL

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HAVE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF WEAKENED GOVERNMENT FORCES TO REASSERT CLAIMS TO ANCIENT TRIBAL LANDS. IN SIDAMO PROVINCE, THE GUJJIS AND DERASSAS HAVE BATTLED INTERMITTENTLY FOR LAND IN WESTERN SIDAMO/ EASTERN

GEMU GOFA WHICH BOTH CLAIM. WE HAVE UNCONFIRMED REPORTS OF FIGHTING BETWEEN DERASSAS AND BORANAS IN WESTERN AND SOUTHERN SIDAMO. WE HAVE SEFERAL EYE-EITNESS ACCOUNTS OF GENERAL GALLA UNREST IN NORTHERN SIDAMO, SOME OF IT ZEMETCHA-INSPIRED, SOME DIRECTED AGAINST THE ARUSSI GALLAS' TRADITIONAL ENEMIES, THE SIDAMOS AND GUJJIS. THE WOLLAMO-SODDO AREA HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY RESTIVE WITH NUMEROUS SHOOTINGS AND CASTRATIONS REPORTED, INCLUDING THE KILLING OF A POLICE CAPTAIN AND SEVERAL LOCALS. ADDITIONALLY, THERE IS A DISSIDENT AMHARA GROUP LOCATED IN CENTRAL SIDAMO WHICH IS OPPOSING AND OPPOSED BY GALL ATRIBALS ATTEMPTING TO REGAIN ANCESTRAL LANDS AND THE CENTRAL GOVT. GOVT MEDIA HAVE INDICATED THAT AS MANY AS 50 OF THESE DISSIDENTS HAVE BEEN KILLED/CAPTURED IN RECENT WEEKS. A SOURCE CONNECTED TO ANOTHER INSURGENT GROUP CLAIMS THERE ARE AS MANY AS 3,000 AMHARA FIGHTING IN CENTRAL SIDAMO ALTHOUGH THIS FIGURE IS ALMOST CERTAINLY EXAGGERATED.

L. GEMU GOFA -- THE EMB HAS NUMEROUS REPORTS OF INTER-TRIBAL WARFARE IN GEMU GOFA, ESPECIALLY CENTERED AROUND THE RATHER AGGRESSIVE

GUJJI TRIBE MENTIONED ABOVE. THE ZEMETCHA STUDENTS HAVE ALSO BEEN ACTIVE IN GEMU GOFA IN INCITING TRIBAL FEELINGS AND REPORTS INDICATE THAT MANY OF THEM HAVE DIVIDED ALONG TRIBAL LINES. WE ARE AWARE OF ONE INCIDENT WHERE ZEMETCHA-INSPIRED TRIBALS STOLE WEAPONS FROM THE POLICE ARMORY IN JINKA FOR USE AGAINST "AMHARAS" (LANDLORDS).

M. KAFFA -- SOUTHER KAFF HAS BEEN THE SCENE OF BITTER INTER-TRIBAL WARFARE AS VARIOUS SHANKILLA ((NILOTICS) HAVE CROSSED THE OMO RIVER FROM GEMU GOFA TO RECLAIM TRADITIONAL TRIBAL LAND IN SOUTHERN KAFFA. VARIOUS MISSIONARY REPORTS INDICATE AS MANY AS 1,000 KILLED SINCE THE FIGHTING BEGAN. BOTH JIMMA AND BONGA HAVE BEEN CENTERS OF UNREST, MUCH OF WHICH IS ZEMETCHA INSPIRED. RECENT REPORTS INDICATE THAT AN ARMY CAPTAIN WHO WAS THE ZEMETCHA DIRECTOR IN JIMMA WAS KILLED BY PEASANTS. MOST REPORTS PLACE THE CENTER OF THE OROMO (GALLA) LIBERATION FRONT IN THE JUMMA AREA ALTHOUGHT WE ARE UNAWARE OF ANY ACTION TAKEN WHICH WE COULD DEFINITELY ASCRIBED TO THIS GROUP. THE FORMER GOVERNOR OF SHOA GEMIRA AWRAJA APPARENTLY CONTINUES TO LEAD A DISSIDENT GROUP OF SEVERAL HUNDRED

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IN HIS HOME GROUNDS IN WESTERN KAFFA.

N. ILLUBABOR -- EMB HAS FEW CURRENT REPORTS OF ANYTHING OCCURRING IN ILLUBABOR BUT THIS HAS BEEN THE SCENE OF INTER-TRIBAL WARFARE IN THE PAST INVOLVING VARIOUS SHANKILLA TRIBES AGAIN. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF SUDANESE REFUGEES LIVING IN WESTERN ILLUBABOR AT PRESENT.

2. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THERE ARE PROBLEMS OF ONE SORT OR ANOTHER IN ALL 14 PROVINCES OF ETHIOPIA, ONLY THE ERITREAN INSURGENTS AND THE AFAR APPEAR TO POSE ANY SERIOUS THREAT TO THE DIRG. GOVT RESOURCES HAVE CONSEQUENTLY BEEN CONCENTRATED IN THESE AREAS, LEAVING MANY OF THE OTHER AREAS TO REVERT TO LOCAL CONTTROL. SINCE THE OTHER DISSIDENT GROUPS ARE GENERALLY LOCALIZED AND LACK ADEQUATE RESOURCES AND COORDINATION, THEY POSE ALMOST NO THREAT TO THE DIRG EXCEPT INSOFAR AS IT ATTEMPTS TO IMPLEMENT LAND REFORM IN THOSE AREAS. THE LEADERS OF THESE DISSIDENT GROUPS ARE GENERALLY OLD ORDER FIGURES WHOSE OX ISBEING GORED BYLAND REFORM AND THE DIRG'S OTHER SOCIALIST POLCIES. THE TRIBAL WARFARE IN ETHIOPIA IS TRADITIONAL AND FREQUENTLY IGNORED BY THE CENTRAL GOVT EXCEPT WHEN IT EFFECTS OUTSIDERS. THE TRIBAL CLASHES HAVE BEEN EXACERBATED IN SOME AREAS BY ZEMATCHOCH (PARTICULARLY GALLA STUDENTS) AND BY THE FACT THAT THE TRIBALS THEMSELVES PROBABLY PERCEIVE THE CENTRAL GOVT AS EXERTING LESS CONTROL IN THEIR AREAS.

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